



LOCAL NEWS | CITY COUNCIL

City tables bulk pickup issue

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San Angelo residents will have to wait a bit longer to see if bulk waste could be picked up more regularly.

At Tuesday's meeting, the City Council considered but ultimately tabled an item that would amend the contract with Republic Services to move bulk pickup — such as bags of clippings and other yard waste, old appliances, furniture and other similar items — from a quarterly schedule to a monthly one. To balance that, recycling pickup would change from weekly to every other week.

In his report to council, the city's Director of Operations Shane Kelton said, "We're not proposing any increases in fees." Trash would continue to be picked up weekly. If the measure had passed, the changes would have been effective Aug. 1.

He said residents who do a lot of recycling could request a second recycling bin from Republic free of charge — an offer that would be valid for six months once the service changed.

Kelton said the proposed changes reflect the results of an online trash survey conducted in March, with 76 percent of respondents in favor of increasing the regularity of bulk pickup.

Councilwoman Charlotte Farmer pointed out the survey was completed by 2,626 respondents out of approximately 30,000 local households serviced. She was also concerned that "we are just now a year getting into this (weekly recycling) and we want to change it again," suggesting the changes would lead to more confusion.

Republic would continue to run 11 trucks in San Angelo. Right now it uses six for trash pickup, one for bulk pickup and four for recyclables. If the contract were amended, the company would switch one of the trucks from recycling to bulk pickup. Kelton said the company would also hire one or two more people to ride in the back of the truck and help with bulk pickup.

Depending on use of the service, the company could also pay more for hauling the bulk waste to the landfill.

"I don't feel I have enough information on the financial side to feel this is in the taxpayers' best interest," Councilwoman Elizabeth Grindstaff said. "If we could wait, we could ask for more public input and at least get more public buy-in."

"The public needs to feel like they have more ownership in this contract than they do," she said, adding that her constituents were still upset they didn't get input on the front end of the contract.

Mayor Dwain Morrison said the monthly bulk pickup was "the perfect solution" and long overdue.

"I would have liked to see this done two months ago so we could have hit this lawn waste during the growing season and not have the problem we have created in our community," he said, adding that he was getting a lot of calls. "We need to get this started and get it going."

Several council members pointed out other trash service issues that needed to be addressed — including bin location, landfill requirements and other ordinance changes.

"I think we should do all the changes at one time and not stir up the constituents, let it die, and then do it again," Councilman Marty Self said.

During public comment, people spoke on both sides of the issue.

R.A. Cantrell, who recently ran for council, said, "to delay on the bulk pickup thing doesn't pass the smell test."

Christy Youker, a representative of Texas Disposal Systems and a San Angelo resident, directed the council's attention to the cost associated with the service received.

"We would suggest, I would suggest as a citizen that maybe we look at the cost of this mainly in the light of the 50 cent penalty that every resident is paying because we're not meeting the recycling tonnage," Youker said.

"We need to remember that's added on there. So let's look at the cost before we move forward."

One San Angeloan shared her feedback on the issue on Facebook. "I have only put something out for bulk trash pickup once and (it) was not picked up," wrote Carolyn Goodlett C. Lara. "... Also, too hard to keep up with schedule for bulk pickup when it is quarterly."

Grindstaff made the motion to table the item. The measure to table passed on a 4-3 vote, with the mayor, Councilman Harry Thomas and Councilwoman Lucy Gonzalez voting against it.

In other business, council approved:

An ordinance amending the Major Thoroughfare Plan, a component of the San Angelo Comprehensive Plan. The amendment includes the addition of three north/south and three east/west roads, while eliminating two planned future roads around the location of the proposed new Tom Green County Jail. This was the first reading and public hearing.

A new five-year contract with San Angelo Host, Inc. to operate concessions for the city until 2021 with an exclusive right to sell alcoholic

beverages. The city and San Angelo Host have worked together for about nine years. In fiscal year 2015 the city received \$36,617.24 from its concession agreement with the company.

A new five-year licensing agreement with Nasworthy Lake Tours, operators of the paddle wheel steamboat the Tule Princess, to a more sheltered location in Spring Creek Park. The request was made after the company's dock suffered repeated storm damage this spring.